

REMARKS

Applicants have elected to prosecute Group 1, Species 1, corresponding to claims 1-21. However, as indicated in the office action, Claim 1 is a generic claim. As such, upon allowance of Claim 1, applicants respectfully submit that claims 43-60 should also be allowable.

In the office action, claims 4-6, 11, 14, and 17-20 were indicated as being allowable subject matter, objected to because of dependence on a rejected claim. Also in the office action, claims 1-3, 7-10, 12-13, 15-16, and 19-21, including independent claim 1, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being unpatentable over US Patent No. 4,670,011 issued to Mesek.

Mesek is cited in the office action as disclosing a pair of opposing middle openings, which are labeled "M" on the Examiner's markup of Mesek's Fig. 6. Office Action, pages 6-7. However, Applicants respectfully submit that this interpretation of Mesek is incorrect. Nowhere does Mesek disclose any openings in the absorbent structure. In fact, Mesek only discloses that the absorbent structure have middle portions that are folded inwardly to create a middle portion with almost doubled layers.

In stark contrast, independent claim 1 requires the absorbent structure comprise a pair of opposing middle openings spaced between the middle portion and the lateral flaps. Applicants respectfully submit that this limitation is not disclosed or suggested by Mesek.

Furthermore, Mesek does not disclose at least one rear opening, as required by independent claim 1. The office action cites Mesek's Fig. 6 as disclosing rear openings R, which is essentially labeled as 139, which is described as being a pair of traverse embossments. Col. 14, lines 35-39. Nowhere does Mesek disclose at least one rear opening as required by independent claim 1.

The office action also rejected many of the dependent claims in view of Mesek. However, applicants submit that those dependent claims are also patentable over Mesek for at least the reasons explained above.

It is believed that the present application is a complete condition for allowance. However, should any questions or issues arise after consideration of this response,

Examiner Gibson is invited and encouraged to telephone the undersigned at her convenience.

Please charge any additional fees required by this response to Deposit Account No. 04-1403.

Respectfully submitted,

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